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Understanding of Infectious Disease as per Ayurvedic Perspective - A Simplified Review

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ABSTRACT

Infectious disease in a form of endemic or pandemic bears a great amount of burden on country as well as on the world. Viral infection in the form of Corona or COVID-19 is on destructive mode causing abundance death nowadays. Being an Ayurvedic professional, author wants to give some of basic concepts and descriptions about infectious disease from the view of Ayurvedic philosophy. Without indulging in comparison about both sciences, indisputable points are discussed with their clear and easy understanding. Interested scientists keen to work on this area may find key points for further comprehensive and advanced study.

Key words: Infectious disease, Aupasargika Roga, Sansargaja Roga, Janapadodhwanshaja Vyaadhi, Aagantuka, Vyaadhikshamatva, Immunity, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda also known as 'Indian system of medicine' is the most ancient medical science which aspires two major aspects of health first to protect the health of healthy individual and treatment of diseased person.^[1,2] At the end of Charaka Samhita, Acharya Charaka clearly states that "all the aspects associated with maintenance of health and cure of disease of human being are available in this Ayurvedic classic".^[3] This signifies that all the important information related to health or disease condition of mankind is definitely available in Ayurvedic classics. Though Ayurveda is frequently encountered in the list of

alternative medicines or pseudoscience on internet media, this great science still holds its potency to show its marvel whenever tested. Researches done in the field of Ayurveda prove effectiveness of Ayurvedic principles for successful treatment of large number of diseases as well as their role in maintenance and promotion of healthy body and mind in contemporary time period also.

Broadly disease can be classified in two groupings i.e. communicable and non-communicable diseases.^[4] Communicable disease, infectious disease and transmissible disease are the different names given to this disease entity. This type of disease has specific characteristic that it can be spread from one person to another person. Infectious diseases are illnesses that result from the infection, presence and growth of pathogenic (capable of causing disease) biologic agents in human or other animal host. This may range in severity from asymptomatic (without symptoms) to severe and fatal.^[5] These pathogenic biological agents are microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi. Infectious diseases of animals that can cause disease when transmitted to humans are termed as Zoonotic diseases.^[6]

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Communicable diseases constitute a considerable proportion of the global burden of morbidity and mortality. Current earth-shattering condition of COVID -19 has put the mankind in a big mystery about the solution. Defeating condition after tremendous efforts of medical science for saving life of every patient, thousands of patients are dying day by day. This alarming and agonizing situation has put the humanity in a helpless condition.

With huge respect and a strong belief in this great science, author has made some diminutive efforts to explore some of the references from Ayurvedic classics and put forward here.

What is infectious disease as per Ayurveda?

Infectious disease as per perspective of Ayurveda can be reviewed and discussed under below mentioned considerations.

I) Infectious disease as Aupasargika Roga or Sansargaja Roga

Reference of Aupasargika Roga is found in Susruta Samhita in the chapter where etiological factors for Kushta Roga (different skin diseases) are discussed. Distinctive feature of such diseases is "Sankramanti Naraannaram... (spreads from one human to another human)".^[7] Modes of spread mentioned are caused by physical contact (Intercourse / frequent coming in contact / involve in any gathering), direct physical touch, exhalation of respiration, eating together, sleeping nearby, sitting nearby, and using cloth, ornaments and emoluments. Some of the examples quoted like Kushtha (a group of skin disorders), Jwara (fever), Shosha (~Tuberculosis), Netraabhishtyanda (Conjunctivitis) and Aupasargika Roga.

'Upasarga'^[8] word denotes "to come into contact with or causing trouble or afflicts or a disease super induced due to boding evil". 'Sansarga'^[9] word also bears the similar meaning like "Conjunction, contact, connection or Conjunction of celestial bodies". All meanings put this disease category nearer to infection and infectious disease. To be in contact with infected person or direct touch of infected material will lead to same disease to healthy humans. Graha /

supernatural boding evil might be understood as micro-organism which is inevitable cause of production of the disease and its spread in healthy personnel.

Detailed treatment for this disease category is not available due to obvious understanding by detailed causative factors and similarity in treatment with other Nija Vyaadhi. Personal hygiene is of priority in management protocol. Later on medicinal treatment depends on Doshika dominancy in particular disease. Masurika (~ Chickenpox), Roamantika (~ Measle) like diseases are described in Ayurvedic classics which are infectious type of disease as per modern science.

II) Infectious disease as Janapadodhwanshaja Vyaadhi

Janapadodhwanshaja Vyaadhi literary means those disease which are affected or attacked simultaneously in whole community, country or nation; irrespective of their difference in Prakriti (constitutional traits based on their epigenetic), Ahaar (diet pattern), Dehabala (Physical strength), Saatmya (congenial, suitability), Mana (Psyche) and Vaya (age).^[10,11] This description is quite equivalent to epidemic and pandemic disease, where particular pathogen is responsible to produce similar disease in many peoples of particular geographical area or large geographical area of this world.

Root cause for such disease is Adharma (unrighteousness, injustice, irreligious, demerit, wickedness,^[12] erroneous and sinful acts) which lead to abnormal behavior of nature including air, water, earth and time factor (Kaala – eg. seasons).^[13,14] Their vitiated status will give rise to pathological changes and vulnerability to such epidemic diseases. Adharma or any Apachaar (unwholesome or improper regimen,^[15] not following proper hygienic measures, avoiding cleanliness) will make human more susceptible towards Rakshogana (Raksha – to guard, protect, Rakshogana – a class of Rakshasa) etc like different Bhutasamuha (Bhuta – any living organism divine, human, animals, plant etc.).^[16] Deep down meaning can be perceived here about these entities likely to be protective to human body like intestinal

bacteria. We are surrounded with such microorganism but being invisible to our eyes we cannot see them. But references are found in ancient literature like Vedic texts about their existence and treatment measures to protect from their ill effect.

Shortly it can be understood that these Rakshasa and Bhuta are small creatures which are capable to harm or injure human being. Imbalance in the Nature and earth acquired by Adharma, gives rise to such type of human destroying Janapadodhwanshaja Vyaadhi (epidemics). Considerable role of Adharma in human acquaintances at somatic or psychic level should be focused for being corrected for eradication of such diseases and thus saving human lives.

III) Infectious disease as Aagantuja (Aagantuka) Vyaadhi

Based on Primary Etiology, there are two main category of disease i.e. Nija and Aagantuja^[17-19] Nija means disease due to bodily causes which create disturbances in homeostasis because of improper lifestyle (Apathya Nimittaja). Meaning of Aagantuja word is incidental or accidental^[20] which implies external factors those are strange or new to human body and produce disease by entering or affecting it.

For better understanding lifestyle disorders like Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension etc are Nija type and Malaria, Tuberculosis, Chickenpox etc like infectious disease comes in Aagantuja category. In this context infectious diseases are considered as Aagantuja Vyaadhi as per Ayurveda. Here any micro-organism or pathogen like bacteria, virus etc which is normally not a part of human body is expected to / to be entered in the body and create disease.

Because of strong association between Nija & Aagantuja, Aagantuja itself will be followed by Nija due to vitiation of Tridosha.^[21] Hence its treatment is similar to Nija along with consideration of Aagantuja factor.

Likewise secondary bacterial infection to any primary viral infection may add to pathology and clinical presentation, Aagantuja Roga plays role as primary etiology and later on after creating Doshika imbalance

they will convert in disease entity similar to Nija Vyaadhi. Hence treatment again depends on level of Vitiating of Dosha and Doshika dominancy. In addition here 'Aagantuja' external factor is prime causative factor to create pathology, hence removal or correction or management of that particular factor becomes essential to focus first in treatment protocol.

Similar to use of antimicrobial drugs (anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-fungal etc.) along with anti-pyretic, anti-inflammatory etc. drugs are used for treatment of any infectious disease according to etiology and symptomatology; above theory can be perceived.

IV) Miscellaneous

Some of the view points are discussed considering their description for some usefulness for etiology, symptomatology or treatment aspects. Bird view on pin pointed areas is as below.

a. Jaataharini or Revati

In Kashyapa Samhita concept of Jaataharini or Revati is the set of diseases caused by one group of pathogenic micro-organism entity known as Graha. As per textual reference, only on Sansarga (Conjunction) these Jaataharini (Revati) is visible from Divyachakshu (divine eyes / extraordinary brilliant vision) and Dharma is the only factor having ability for its eradication or removal.^[22] With contemporary wisdom we can assume similarity about this description with structural visibility of microorganisms like virus, bacteria, fungi, cyst, larva etc. is possible only through microscopic lenses only. Naked eyes are not capable for seeing these microbes.

Likewise role of Adharma in Janapadodhwanshaja Vyaadhi, Adharma is in the basic etiology for jaataharini also. Adharma in specification includes all the aspects like rejection of religious work like auspicious acts, purity, cleanliness, faith, love, care and respect; over indulgence in food which are not good for health; not maintaining mental health and becomes opponent to all good morals for healthy Body, Mind and Soul. All these things create abnormality in complete healthy status of mankind

and making those individuals or family susceptible towards such disorders caused by Jaataharini (Revati).

In nutshell all the points of this description shows the entire action either micro or macro may lead to break the protective layer of health. 1. Positivity and peace of mind 2. Good morals for life and all lives on the earth and 3. Proper care of health by following proper lifestyle and activities; these are the essential standards to have ideal health to be practiced and achieved by humankind.

Most of Ayurvedic classics observe identical management protocol for Balagraha treatment. Dhoopan (Medicated fumigation) is the most effectual part of this protocol. Medicines which are having anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties along with air purifying quality are used for Dhoopan. It's the insightful perception and superior knowledge of Ayurvedic Acharyas who were using those medicines to destroy micro-organism existing in air and thus making this contaminated and infected air to usable and harmless air.

b. Impaired status of Vyaadhikshamatva (~Immunity)

As said by Acharya Charaka 'Not each and every individual is capable to bear or tolerate the disease'.^[23] There is protective strength inside the body to resist disease causing pathogen by making them submissive and unable to produce the disease; this can be understood in regards to this Vyaadhikshamatva concept. This power varies in every individual. It is having subsets i.e. Sahaja, Kalaja and Yuktikruta and their respective meaning as Natural, Time depended (seasonal, Age, time factor) and Acquired (by various measures of immunity enhancement).

In addition to bodily features like "Samamamsapramanastu..." also Agni as digestive power is mentioned for its very important role for making strongly healthy individual who is not easily affected by diseases.^[24] Amongst Tridosha, Prakrita (natural/not vitiated) Kapha is responsible for Bala (Vyaadhikshamatva / Immunity).^[25] For maintenance of Prakrita Kapha, Agni is expected to have good

functional level otherwise its lead to Mandaagni / Agnimaandya (Poor digestive fire), Ajeerna and other disorder. Abnormal status of such Kapha suddenly leaves its function as Bala (~immunity) giving rise to many diseases.

c. Role of Upadrava (~ Complication) of Vyaadhi^[26,27]

Complication is the main cause for death due to infectious disease. If primary infection is self limiting or mild to moderate without leaving any consequences, secondary infection may add to severity and sometimes leads to bad prognosis. Any minor or major disease which arises after previous disease also depended on first disease, is known as Upadrava. It subsides after subsiding previous disease. It is more painful or more intense and hence asked to be treated promptly. As per the severity Upadrava should be treated first or afterwards the primary disease or treated simultaneously.

d. Vishaja Vyaadhi (symptoms or disease due to toxin)

Pathogens are capable to create disease pathology by attacking the host and invading host cell; and destroying them using either endo-toxin or exo-toxin. Meaning of Virus is poison or Venom in Latin language. In Ayurvedic toxicology (Agada Tantra) detailed description about all available toxins at that ancient time is available with in depth symptomatology and treatment. 'Visha' word means poison, venom or anything actively pernicious.^[28] There are very fewer chances still exists about some effective formulations might be useful in some viral or bacterial condition.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

A man is the most powerful species on the earth, nowadays struggling for his existence. He has created superior and highly sophisticated life for him. At the same time he has also established many consequences like many diseases of mankind and disturbances in the nature during his race of development and progress. Despite all the advancements in 21st century in the field of medical

science and assistive modern technology, still some diseases and health problems have put mankind in great distress. Good health is the highest priority amongst most sensible matter in the midst of thinkers of humanity.

Without claiming precise similarity between infectious disease and Ayurvedic viewpoints discussed above, Ayurvedic modalities must be checked and trialed for either they are effective or not. Ayurveda is time tested discipline and these scientific principles are the results of enormous efforts and profound knowledge of our ancient Acharyas. The secret of good health and its related aspects are weaved in Ayurveda which requires only working for its exploration, explanation and implementation. But considering scientific approach for ethical and ideal treatment expected to be designed for mankind, it doesn't look objectionable to put Ayurvedic protocol and medicine under standard guidelines for being checked.

This article is prepared in a way to create basic understanding for understanding of infectious diseases in Ayurvedic classics. In current crisis of COVID-19, each human being is under the risk of this dreadful and fatal infection. No any medicine in term of Vaccine or choice of drug is available as of today. Current situation is like each and every day thousands of people are reported positive for infection of COVID-19 with high worldwide mortality rate. Ayurveda bears potential areas to be explored out for its efficacy in such condition also. This is just a cluster of thought for approaching in depth study about this viral infection with some affirmative results for this pandemic disease.

Note:

- Sign '~' shows probable similarity between Ayurvedic and Modern terminology without claiming correlation by author.
- Sign '?' in reference part shows not mentioned chapter number in Kashyapa Samhita due to unavailability of missing parts of this Samhita
- This is a review article based on reviews of Ayurvedic classical texts, not claiming about any

kind of care or treatment which falls under misguiding information about COVID-19.

- Therefore no claim should be made towards author and/or his institutional workplace.

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